

Pulse Power

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In Canada, one person dies every seven minutes from Cardiovascular disease (CVD). As the number one killer of both men and women, your heart's health is worth some serious consideration. CVD is a number of diseases that involve your heart and /or blood vessels, including myocardial infarction or heart attack, stroke, congestive heart failure and aneurysm.

Risk factors for CVD include multiple factors, only some of which you control. For example you cannot control risk factors such as age, ethnicity and family history. You can, however, do something about other major risk factors for CVD – smoking, alcohol use, diet, levels of stress and watching for and managing high blood pressure and diabetes.

Your heart is literally the core of your existence, and its health is the culmination of your lifestyle activities and your choices over a lifetime. CVD for most people, does not happen by accident.

Taking control of your heart health.

The encouraging news is that heart disease can be prevented and managed. Here are eight of the most beneficial choices you can make to keep your pulse power at its peak.

Butt out, exercise, eat a healthy diet, limit alcohol use, maintain a healthy weight, monitor and manage your blood pressure and manage your stress levels.

Monitor, measure and target optimal numbers.

Resting heart rate

Before fixing your cup of morning java, diving into the emails that proliferated over night, how about before rolling out of bed in the morning check your pulse? The best way to do so is to find the pulsating artery in your wrist, just at the base of your thumb when your hand is facing up. Gently place three fingers of one hand over this area until you feel the artery. Simply count the number of beats in fifteen seconds, multiply that number by four and you have your resting heart rate for one minute. Research indicates that an **optimal** resting heart rate of **76** or less is a good sign and over 76 places you in a higher risk for cardiovascular disease.

What to do if your resting heart rate is greater than 76, well we slow the heart down by making it go faster. Yes that means exercising.

What better time to be out doors, even just walking. Get a pedometer that counts your steps, set a target for 10,000 steps a day.

A recent study by Global Corporate Challenge, found that individuals engaged in the 10,000 per days step challenge had a 41% reduction in sick days than individuals not in the challenge.

Blood Pressure (BP)

Blood pressure readings measure the pressure of the blood against the wall of the artery when the heart is at maximal contraction and when it relaxes as the blood can enter the heart chambers. The average middle age North American has a BP reading of 130/80, but do not forget that average individual will most likely die from cardiovascular disease. Target your BP to be **optimal, 115/75** or less. Home BP machines can be found at most pharmacies.

Three things you can do in addition to daily exercise. Watch your salt intake (read labels on the food you eat and do not exceed 2300 mg per day, **optimal** is less than 1500 mg per day), manage your stress and ensure you consume healthy food. Check out the **DASH** (Dietary Approach to Stop Hypertension) diet. Google (DASH) or email me for a copy.

Waist size

Size does matter. Your **optimal** waist size should be less than **half your height in inches**. (Six feet tall: 72 inches, waist size should be less than 36 inches) If greater, you have an increased risk for cardiovascular disease as this belly fat causes an inflammatory response in your body and drives your critical numbers, like cholesterol and blood sugar, the wrong way.

3500 calories is what it takes to lose or gain 1 pound. Just reducing your calorie intake by 100 calories a day, one less small glass of wine, over one year will create a weight loss of about 11 pounds. Burn more calories by exercising and watch the belly size shrink.

Be the CEO of your health by getting your three number to the optimal target.

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